CANADA AS A BORDERLANDS SOCIETY

BY
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BORDERLANDS MONOGRAPH SERIES #2

BORDERLANDS

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The Borderlands Project

Americans and Canadians live together in North America as friends, allies, and partners in trade. The 5,000-mile border accommodates a diverse flow of people, commodities, and ideas. It is a paradox, but the sense of mutual security and amity afforded by a century's experience with the "undefended" border masks the border's complexity and importance. The open border is an immense asset that is routinely taken for granted. Consequently, the border relationship of Canada and the United States has not been adequately reflected in public policy discussions in the two countries.

The premise of the Borderlands Project is that North America runs more naturally north and south than east and west as specified by national boundaries, and that modern communication and efficient transportation help to blur distinctions between regional neighbors. While people living near the border pay allegiance to their respective sovereign authorities in Washington, D.C. and Ottawa, they sometimes have more in common with neighbors across the border than with their fellow citizens.

The Borderlands Project is meant to promote greater recognition and understanding of the status of the United States and Canada as border neighbors. It is a comprehensive study of transborder attributes undertaken by a multidisciplinary team of social science and humanities scholars from both sides of the border. The study will culminate in the publication of an important reference book for educators, government officials, business and civic leaders, journalists, and general readers in both countries. A series of monographs reporting on current borderlands research is also offered, as a record of scholarship in this cross-disciplinary area. The Borderlands Project constitutes a new set of lenses for seeing the two-way importance of the American-Canadian relationship. The project is designed to communicate the results of borderlands research to a growing audience in both countries.

The American-Canadian border provides a rare model of a social laboratory. Most of the eastern half is a natural water division

between the two countries; the western half is an artificial surveyor's line. Which is the more real division between attitudes, values, and allegiances? In some cases, similarities (the pervasive impact of television, for instance) bring border neighbors closer together. In other cases, the similarities of some adjacent regions (for example, the reliance on basic industries such as farming or automaking) may produce competitive frustrations.

The American-Canadian Borderlands Project is not driven by ideological commitment; neither nationalist nor continentalist agendas have informed it. As a new set of lenses for policymakers, it is meant only to sharpen the images of reality formed by competition and cooperation between two industrial democracies in North America.

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Borderlands Monograph Series

The Borderlands Project is a research and compiling effort designed to produce a borderlands sourcebook for government officials, educators, and private-sector executives in both the United States and Canada. With more than 100 scholars involved in borderlands research, the project has received numerous manuscripts. In order to communicate research rapidly and to establish a borderlands dialogue, we have also inaugurated a Borderlands Monograph Series. Each monograph is a major statement of current work in some aspect of American-Canadian relations, and, as a whole, the series will stand as a record of the depth and diversity of borderlands research, as applied to the relationship between Canada and the United States.

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Canada as a Borderlands Society

Roger Gibbins

The international border which Canada and the United States share is commonly used as a symbol for the relationship between the two countries. Hence the phrase "the world's longest undefended border" is thought to capture the friendship that exists between the two countries, and to reflect the extensive north-south flow of people, resources, and culture which the border does little to impede. The phrase also acknowledges the lack of significant geographical, racial, linguistic (except in the case of Québec), or religious barriers between the American and Canadian populations, barriers which a political boundary might reinforce under less fortunate circumstances. Unlike Robert Frost's neighbor in "Mending Wall," Canadians and Americans appear to reject the notion that "Good fences make good neighbors."[1]

In this sense, of course, the term "undefended border" expresses an idealized relationship that bears only a rough resemblance to reality, as any Canadian will realize when facing Canadian customs officials upon returning home from a holiday or shopping trip to the United States. One could also mention that the United States has no need to defend the border from Canadian military incursions, and that Canada, in any event, would be unable to defend the border militarily against the United States. More importantly, it can be argued that Canadians have, in fact, made a concerted effort to defend the border through a variety of political, albeit nonmilitary means, and that the defence of Canada against American intrusions forms one of the fundamental axes of Canadian political life.[2] However, the point of this essay is not to challenge the mythology of the undefended border but, rather, to argue that while Americans and Canadians may share the same border, they share it in very different ways.

Here it is essential to think of the border more as a state of mind than as a simple physical or geographic fact. Thus, when I say "sharing the border" I am referring to the degree to which Canadians and Americans are aware of the neighboring country and thus of the border, to the degree to which Canada's existence impinges upon the consciousness of Americans, and to the degree to which the existence of the United States impinges upon the consciousness of Canadians.[3] Briefly put, I would argue that the Canadian-American border has a very limited penetration into American society and life; the border's impact on the country at large is negligible, and its impact even on American communities physically proximate to the border is slight. For Canadians, however, the border looms very large indeed, and its effects are felt not only in communities proximate to the border but also throughout the country. The border penetrates deeply into the Canadian consciousness, identity, economy, and polity to a degree unknown and unimaginable in the United States. Thus, Canadians and Americans do not share the international border in the same way, for Canada alone can be described as a "borderlands society."

This argument will be pursued in three sections. In a rather abstract fashion, the first section discusses some of the general features one might expect to find in borderland communities. The second section focuses upon two particular communities straddling the international border—Oroville in north-central Washington and Osoyoos in south-central British Columbia. More specifically, this section explores the attitudinal impact of the international border on the residents of these two similar and yet, because of the border, quite different communities. The third section looks more closely at some special features of the Canadian-American border, and at how those features come into play in Canada and the United States.

Borderland Communities

To begin, it is important, although admittedly difficult, to dispel the images that come to mind from movie stereotypes of the border town, stereotypes that, for the most part, originate in Hollywood characterizations of the Mexican-American border. (Apart from a few gangster movies set during the prohibition era, the Canadian-American border has not had much of a cultural airing on either side of the border.) Thus, images of cantinas and souvenir-laden markets, much less images of barbed-wire entanglements and searchlight towers, do not take us very far in coming to

grips with the Canadian-American border. In more analytical terms, it is useful to think of borderland communities as not only physically proximate to an international border, but also as communities shaped in some direct and immediate way by that border. They should be, moreover, communities characterized by at least two unique features.

The first feature should be an atypically high level of transnational interaction, "transnational" being defined as "contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of governments."[4] Transnational relations encompass interactions among a vast array of private actors—individuals, corporations, trade unions, sports leagues, and service clubs—that, in sheer volume, overwhelm intergovernmental relations in the Canadian-American case. More generally, it might be noted that the American penetration of Canada, around which so much of the Canadian-American relationship revolves, has been almost entirely nongovernmental in character, which may account for the lack of more acute Canadian concern over the extent of that penetration.[5]

As figure 1 illustrates, Canadians should encounter Americans more frequently and across a wider range of situations in borderland communities than they would elsewhere, just as the interpersonal contact that Americans have with Canadians should intensify as the border is approached. What figure 1 may not clearly represent is that such contact occurs on both sides of the border; Canadians in borderland communities are not only more likely to encounter Americans in their own community than are Canadians living in Canadian communities more distant from the border, but they are also more likely than other Canadians to cross the border and to encounter Americans on their own turf, so to speak.

This feature of borderland communities is examined extensively elsewhere in the Borderlands Project, and will not be pursued at any great length here. However, it is worth noting that Canadian communities lying close to the border include many of the country's largest cities—Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver—and that three out of four Canadians live within 150 kilometers of the international border, with the majority living farther south than the forty-ninth parallel. As a consequence, the United States is readily accessible for most Canadians who cross the border by the millions to visit friends and relatives, vacation, and pursue business interests. By contrast, the major American cities and the great bulk of the American population lie well to the south of the international border and, as a consequence, the opportunities for transnational

contact are greatly reduced.[6] It is also worth noting that Canadians who live near the international border also live in the Canadian heartland, whereas Americans who do so reside at the geographical, cultural, and economic fringes of the United States. Thus, in a proportionate sense, the intensified transnational interaction that the border might be expected to engender should have a greater impact on Canadians than on Americans; a much larger percentage of the Canadian than the American population should be "touched" by the international border.

The second feature of borderland communities, and the one of particular concern to the present analysis, is that they reflect the general expectation that the societal impact of the neighboring country shows as one approaches the border. An American in Detroit, for example, is more likely to rub up against things Canadian than is an American in Kansas City or San Francisco. In this respect, however, I would argue that the border has a very different impact on Canada than it does on the United States. As figure 2 suggests, the societal impact of Canada on the United States is likely to be very limited overall and is likely to decrease sharply, even geometrically, as one moves south from the border. Apart from isolated pockets of Canadian expatriates and "snowbirds" in Arizona, Florida, and Hawaii, one may not have to move much farther south than a proverbial stone's throw from the border before the Canadian impact is all but extinguished. The international border prevents the penetration of the United States by Canadian influence, yet fails to prevent the reverse.

While one might argue that Canadian recording artists such as Burton Cummings, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Anne Murray, and Neil Young have defied the border by leaving a significant mark on American popular culture, Robert Wright argues that they have done so by reflecting American, rather than Canadian cultural values:

> In the end, it was the natural affinity of Canadian recording artists for the American folk tradition and their uniquely ambivalent perception of American society, not anti-Americanism, that accounted for their remarkable ascendance as heroes of the Sixties generation. Canadians did not simply offer a foreigner's critique of American society—this kind of parochialism would only have alienated them from their American audience. Rather, they had preserved in their music the explicitness, sensitivity, and vitality of a protest tradition that was, in its essence, American.[7]

Figure 1

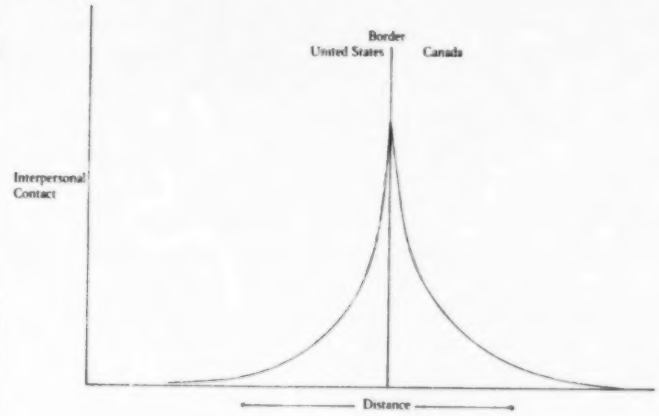
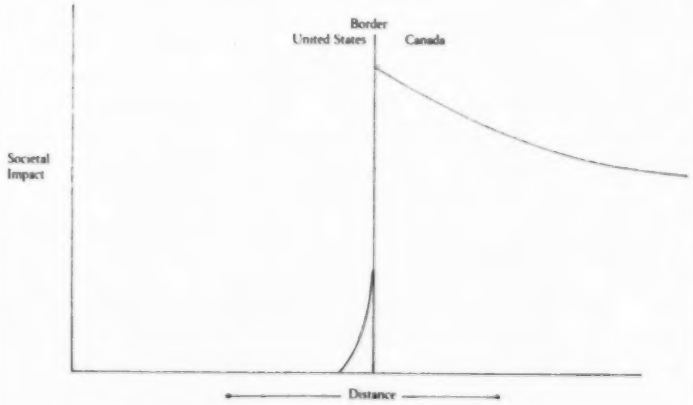


Figure 2



Wright's analysis of popular culture, I would argue, sheds more general light on the Canadian impact on American society as one moves south from the border; that impact persists only if Canadian cultural artifacts are suitably garbed in American cultural cloth. In the Canadian case, however, the societal impact of the United States continues unabated and unmodified as one moves northward, away from the border. For a Canadian living five hundred kilometers north of the border in Edmonton, Alberta, the exposure to American television, magazines, movies, consumer goods, music, and business is little different from that of a Canadian living in the border communities of Windsor, Ontario, or White Rock, British Columbia. It is in this sense that I would characterize Canada at large as a borderland community.

This is not to deny that Canadian communities more physically proximate to the international border are shaped in important ways by that proximity. Indeed, both the community studies embedded in the Borderlands Project and the empirical illustration given in the next section of this essay provide ample evidence of the role that the border can play in molding community characteristics. In Canada, however, the effects of the border extend much deeper into the countryside, and into the Canadian psyche, than they do in the United States. While the border may have considerable impact on Sweetgrass, Montana, it has little if any impact on Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, or Portland, whereas the difference between its impact on Coutts, Alberta, and Edmonton is a much more subtle one of degree, little influenced by the physical distances involved.

In short, the argument being advanced is that both the border and the borderland communities take on quite different properties in Canada than they do in the United States. While Americans and Canadians may share the same border, the impact of that border on the respective national communities is far from symmetrical. Moreover, this lack of symmetry is apparent even within communities lying close to the international border.

An Empirical Illustration

The differential impact of the international border can be illustrated by survey research conducted in two small, neighboring communities. In the summer of 1972, I had the opportunity to conduct 202 interviews in Osoyoos, British Columbia and 213 interviews in Oroville, Washington.[8] Both communities had populations of approximately four thousand, and were located only six miles apart on the shores of the same lake, straddling the

international border. However, while both communities shared the same climate and agricultural foundations, the border bestowed significant advantages on the Canadian town that its American neighbor did not share.

To take but one example, Osoyoos enjoyed a thriving tourist industry and had twenty-five motels, while Oroville had but two. Although, to some degree, this difference reflected the more advantageous physical situation of Osoyoos, it sprang in a more fundamental way from asymmetrical border effects. Because Osoyoos lay on the southern edge of Canada and enjoyed a climate seldom equalled in other parts of the country—just to the east of Osoyoos signs directed visitors to "Canada's only desert," a barren patch of rattlesnake-infested land set aside as an Indian reserve—it had considerable luck in attracting tourists. However, Oroville's location on the northern edge of the United States was a marked liability. North-central Washington held no great appeal for vacationing Americans; not only was better weather to be found further south but, if vacationers went as far north as Oroville, they almost invariably continued into Canada. Yet, for Canadians deciding to travel into the United States, there was little incentive to stop just south of the border in Oroville. Therefore, in most respects, Oroville languished as a tourist draw while only six miles to the north tourism was booming. Oroville could capture little more than some spinoff from the Canadian tourist trade; although tourists lodged north of the border, evenings would find many of them in the bars and movie theaters of the American town. Thus, Osoyoos provided the accommodation and Oroville the nightlife, an arrangement facilitated by the ease with which the border could be crossed.

In several rather interesting ways, the differential impact of the border on Canadian and American communities, and on the national societies more generally, found reflection in the surveys conducted in Osoyoos and Oroville. The first point to note is that there was a great deal of interaction between the two communities, interaction that stemmed as much from mutual dependence as from mutual attraction. One community, for example, had the better butcher and golf course, while the other had the better hairdresser and dentist. One had better bars and cheaper gasoline, the other had better restaurants and greater shopping opportunities.

It is not surprising, then, that at the time of the survey, 20 percent of the Canadian respondents and 26 percent of the American respondents visited the neighboring community at least weekly, while another 42 percent of the Canadian respondents and

55 percent of the American respondents visited the neighboring community at least monthly. When American respondents were asked how often they visited parts of Canada other than Osoyoos, 24 percent answered that they visited at least monthly while another 37 percent answered that they visited more than once a year. The corresponding Canadian figures, however, were considerably lower; only 4 percent of the Canadian respondents visited parts of the United States other than Oroville at least monthly, while another 10 percent visited those parts more than once a year. Thirty-one percent of the Canadian respondents had never gone past Oroville, compared to only 11 percent of the American respondents who had never ventured into Canada beyond Osoyoos.

Given the variation in cross-national exposure that existed within both sets of respondents, I tried to determine the impact that cross-border visitations might have on Canadian attitudes towards the United States, and on American attitudes towards Canada. In the first instance, frequency of cross-national contact, either restricted to Oroville or more broadly considered, turned out to have *no* impact on Canadian attitudes towards the United States. Although such attitudes were explored through a wide variety of measurement techniques, in no case was personal exposure to the United States systematically related to Canadian attitudes. Respondents who experienced frequent contact were neither more nor less favorably inclined towards Americans or the United States than were respondents experiencing infrequent contact. Even more dramatically, respondents with friends and/or relatives in Oroville, or elsewhere in the United States, were no different in their attitudes than were respondents lacking such social and familial contacts. Thus, even though the Osoyoos respondents lived within a few miles of the international border, and even though their location provided many of them with the opportunity for frequent personal contact with Americans and the United States, the borderland environment had no attitudinal effect.

A more detailed analysis showed that the attitudes of Osoyoos respondents towards Americans and the United States were shaped primarily by the broader ideological currents of Canadian political life, and that Osoyoos residents did not stand apart from those currents despite the fact that they lived in a borderland community.[9] Now while this finding could be interpreted to show that the border per se had no attitudinal impact, I would argue that it shows instead how far into Canada the impact of the border had penetrated. It was not that residents of Osoyoos experienced a

borderland environment that other Canadians did not; it was that, with respect to the United States, all Canadians shared a borderland environment within which the intensified transnational interaction evident in Osoyoos had little impact.

Although this interpretation of the survey results with respect to the depth of the borderland community in Canada may be contested, the data spoke with a much clearer voice regarding the shallowness of the borderland community on the American side of the border. Despite the fact that the American questionnaire contained a large number of items designed to tap American perceptions of Canada and Canadians, reliable scales or indices could not be constructed to measure the pro- or anti-Canadianism of respondents. Answers to the numerous questions on Canada were empirically unrelated to one another; the fact that a respondent gave a negative (or positive) answer to one question could in no way be used to predict his or her answer to similar questions. While in the Osoyoos survey pro- and anti-American responses hung together in easily recognizable and statistically coherent clusters, this was not the case in the Oroville survey, where respondents lacked any attitudinal consistency with respect to Canada or Canadians. Thus, the degree of pro-Canadian or anti-Canadian sentiment could not be assessed for individual respondents, much less be linked in any systematic way to the amount of cross-national contact experienced by respondents. Although only three miles to the north, Canada and Canadians seemed to be enveloped in an attitudinal fog or mist, objects of infrequent thought and unfocused opinion.

Here it should be stressed that the Oroville respondents were not particularly hostile to Canada or Canadians. On average, and across a variety of measures, American respondents held more favorable opinions of Canada and Canadians than Canadian respondents held of the United States or Americans.[10] For example, American respondents were far more likely to say that they would be happy living in the United States. The more interesting national difference, however, came from the degree of consistency Canadians demonstrated in their outlook towards Americans and the United States, compared to the lack of any such consistency in the outlook of American respondents towards Canada and Canadians.

The full analysis suggested that, for most people, opinions concerning foreign countries do not grow out of personal experience but, rather, are molded by the foreign cultural influences to which they are exposed within their own country. In

the United States, the extremely low salience of Canada means that little cultural shaping of attitudes occurs. Thus, for example, there is little reason to expect American individuals who attend university, watch PBS, read *Time* or *Newsweek*, and vote Republican, to have markedly different outlooks on Canada from those who do not. Pro- or anti-American ideologies are simply not present for transmission and individual acquisition, as pro- and anti-American ideologies are in Canada. As a consequence, the opinions of Canada held by Americans living in borderlands communities are unconstrained, free to drift, as they apparently did from question to question in the Oroville survey. Even within three miles of the border, Canada did not enter the cognitive field of Americans with sufficient strength to engender some consistency of response in the absence of national patterns of belief and opinion.

In this important sense, then, the American borderland appears to be quite different from the Canadian borderland. At least in its attitudinal dimensions, the American borderland is shallow indeed, whereas the Canadian borderland stretches northward to embrace the national society. This difference, in turn, can be linked to the difference between the role that the border itself plays in Canada, and the role it plays in the United States.

An Unusual "International" Border

To this point, the argument has been that the borderland surrounding the Canadian-American border is of a quite different character to the north of the border than it is to the south, that the borderland extends much further into Canada than it does into the United States, and, indeed, that it is characteristic of the larger national society in Canada to a degree that is unimaginable in the United States. Of course, the description of Canada as a borderlands society, and the contrast with the United States which is embedded within that description, must be used with some caution. After all, Canada and United States are hardly unique in sharing an international border; island societies such as Australia, Britain, and New Zealand are the exception rather than the rule. Nor should the description suggest that Canada is a border town writ large, analogous to Tijuana albeit on a grander and colder scale. Americans do not spill over the border in large numbers to sample the Canadian nightlife in such exotic locales as Windsor and White Rock, although many Canadians may go south for just that reason. Large numbers of Americans do come north, but the Canadian scenery and attractions they seek have little to do with the

immediate borderland or with the recreational activities one frequently associates, correctly or not, with the Mexican-American border.[11]

However, while Canada and the United States are far from unique in sharing an international border, the one they share does have some interesting, and perhaps unique features. They are features, moreover, that can change quite dramatically depending upon whether one views them from the north or from the south, and that provide further support for the contention that although Americans and Canadians share the same border, they do so in quite different ways.

Perhaps the first point to stress is that the Canadian-American border is an international border only in the most formal sense. There is, I would argue, little feeling on either side of the border that one's neighbors (or neighbours) are "foreign" in any significant way. The relationship between the two countries is more familial than international, which enables one to refer to "our American (or Canadian) cousins."[12] In a perceptual sense, the international environment begins offshore, beyond the North American continent, and not to the north in Canada or to the south in the United States. This familial feeling stems, in part from the ease with which the border can be crossed and, in most cases, from the absence of geographical features that might reinforce the political boundary. It also stems from the multitude of transnational linkages that span the border, tying together families, friends, business associates, trade unions, corporations, professional associations, sports leagues, fraternal societies, and voluntary organizations. Even in its physical appearance, the Canadian-American border does not look like an international border, or at least like the international border that North Americans are likely to encounter in films, news reports, and spy novels.

The domestic character of the Canadian-American border is apparent in another way. For the vast majority of Americans, the border between the United States and Canada (and probably that between the United States and Mexico) is largely, if not entirely, irrelevant to the shaping of perceptions of the international environment. The primary defence of American interests takes place, not along North American borders, but across a global international environment where boundary lines on maps play an insignificant role in demarcating the United States's economic, military, and ideological entanglements. Moreover, the principal actors within that international environment tend to be military or economic superpowers, such as the Soviet Union and Japan, that

dwarf Canada's international presence; smaller states, such as Cuba, Libya, or Vietnam that pose or have posed some immediate threat to American interests; or states, such as Israel that command an important domestic political constituency. Apart from Arctic fronts and blizzards, threats to the Untied States emanating from Canada tend to be detected only by those with specific economic interests, such as the northwestern producers of cedar shakes, and not by the American public at large. Thus, because Canada is not an international actor in the American world view, the Canadian-American border plays a negligible role, if indeed any role, in shaping American perceptions of the international environment. While the border between Canada and the United States is undoubtedly something more than the border between North and South Dakota, it is not something that Americans must, or do, take into account in coming to grips with the international environment.

For Canadians, however, the Canadian-American border plays a much more important role in shaping perceptions of the international environment, even though the extent to which Canadians see the United States as a "foreign" country is open to question. In part, this importance springs from the fact that the United States is Canada's only neighbor, and, thus, the only mirror within which Canadians can view their own reflection. Unlike Americans, who compare themselves to a broad cross section of the international community, Canadians suffer not only from having a single point of national comparison, but also from that point of comparison being the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world.[13] The border thus acts as a one-way mirror in which Americans see themselves, and in which Canadians see a poorer, colder, less developed, and less vibrant United States. For Canadians, the image of Canada cast back by the border is that of a country populated by Americans with overshoes and colds, a country whose national symbol is not the soaring eagle but, rather, a large rodent noted for its ability to run for cover at the first sign of danger.

If the Canadian-American border has little, or, in most cases, no impact on the world view of Americans, it has a major, even constricting impact on the world view of Canadians. The Canadian-American relationship is so important to Canada in so many ways that Canada's relationships with the larger international community pale in comparison. Although Canadians are by no means blind to the larger international environment, and while the Canadian government has been a very active player within the international community, the fact remains that Canadians are preoccupied with

Canadian-American relations to a much greater extent than are Americans. Here again, then, Canada stands apart from the United States as a borderlands society, a society in which affairs of the border have a much greater salience and importance than they do in the United States.

Finally, it should be noted that the border itself extends much more deeply into Canada than it does into the United States. It is significant, for example, that Canadians flying south to the United States go through American immigration clearance before leaving Canada rather than upon arriving in the United States; the border is crossed not in Chicago or San Francisco, but in Toronto or Vancouver. The societal impact of the United States is not restricted to the immediate borderland environment, it is felt throughout the country through vehicles such as cable television. Cable subscribers in Calgary, for example, who constitute the great majority of television viewers in that city, have direct access to four American network channels and three competing Canadian channels. The point here is not to repeat the lament of Canadian cultural nationalists, but simply to note that the border per se has a negligible impact, at best, on the flow of American culture into Canada. As figure 2 suggests, in this sense and in marked contrast to that of the United States, the Canadian borderland stretches out from the forty-ninth parallel to embrace the Canadian society at large.

This also means that the defence of Canadian interests does not take place along the border as such. Rather, that defence extends backwards into the national community, incorporating the great variety of political barriers to American economic and cultural intrusions that have been erected, and often dismantled again, with the passage of time. In searching for some effective means to maintain the boundary between the two continental societies, Canadians have not relied upon the permeable skin provided by the border itself. Instead, they have tried, with mixed enthusiasm and success, to develop a more broadly based immunization system for the body politic, and for the vital organs of the Canadian culture and economy. The defence of the border in a borderlands society requires nothing less.

Conclusion

In drawing this discussion to a close, it is interesting to consider what the impact of the Free Trade Agreement might be on the Canadian society portrayed above, on "Canada as a borderlands

society." On the one hand, agreement should reduce the impact of the border by easing the rites of physical passage; customs controls at the border should vanish or, at the very least, should be rendered much less intrusive. If the proponents of free trade are correct, the agreement should remove a variety of economic irritants from the Canadian-American relationship. It should also reduce the salience of Canadian-American relations within the Canadian political arena as contentious policy initiatives to restrict American access to, or ownership of, the Canadian market, initiatives such as the Foreign Investment Review Agency or the National Energy Program, will be precluded by the agreement.

On the other hand, the Free Trade Agreement may heighten the salience of the border by touching off a nationalist reaction within Canada, or, at least, within influential segments of the Canadian public. In this respect, it is interesting to note Donald Smiley's assessment of the agreement:

> The thrust of any free trade agreement between Canada and the United States will be towards the harmonization of the public policies of the two countries. It is overwhelmingly likely that the direction of the harmonization will be to bring Canadian policies in to harmony with U.S. norms rather than the reverse. Because Canada is essentially a political community rather than an ethnic, cultural or religious one, free trade with the United States will fundamentally compromise Canadian distinctiveness and Canadian nationhood.[14]

If Smiley's assessment is even close to the mark, a nationalist reaction to the impulse for policy harmonization seems inevitable.

Of perhaps greater importance to the argument advanced above is the broader impact of the Free Trade Agreement on Canadian perceptions of the North American environment. In spirit, if not in letter, the agreement urges Canadians to de-emphasize the border between Canada and the United States, to embrace not only a continental market but also a continental, and market-driven, set of values and ideas. The agreement de-emphasizes a sense of place; products, ideas, and values are to be judged on their merit alone and not according to national origin. Within the spirit of the agreement, the border should be reduced more and more to a line on the map, a political boundary that demarcates national differences in social programs without interfering with the continental market in resources, capital, and ideas.

In many of these respects, of course, the Free Trade Agreement reinforces existing trends in the Canadian-American relationship

rather than breaking old patterns. Tariff barriers between the two countries have been gradually falling since 1935, and over the last generation north-south ties between Canadian provinces and American states, and between regional clusters of each,[15] have been increasing in number and strength. As Garth Stevenson points out, those ties, rather than the more generalized relationship between "homogeneous entities called 'Canada' and 'United States'" have, in many ways, come to define the nature of the national relationship. Stevenson goes on to argue that "If Canadian interests are viewed as no more than the sum of provincial interests, and if provincial interests are defined in terms of east versus west or frostbelt versus sunbelt, the forty-ninth parallel will have no more practical significance than the Mason-Dixon Line or the Louisiana Purchase."[16] Clearly, Stevenson's rather gloomy vision has been reinforced by the free trade initiative.

Without casting any judgment on the virtues of the Free Trade Agreement per se, or on the accuracy of Smiley's assessment, it seems likely that over time the agreement will reduce the "borderlands" character of Canadian society. Canadians will define themselves less and less in relation to the border, and the border will penetrate less deeply into the Canadian consciousness and psyche.[17] The defence of sovereignty, and the defence of the Canadian economy, will decline as axes of Canadian political life. In this sense, then, the acrimonious national debate over the Free Trade Agreement in the late 1980s may mark Canada's peak as a borderlands society. At the same time, it seems unlikely that the agreement will have any fundamental impact on the nature of American society. Certainly it will not alter the world view, or even the continental perspective, of most Americans. Indeed, a fair wager would be that most Americans will not even be aware of the Free Trade Agreement. In this sense, both the agreement and the intense political debate that it has engendered in Canada demonstrate the very different role that the Canadian-American border has played to date in the lives of Canadians and Americans. Canadians alone have lived in a borderlands society.

Notes

1. Robert Frost, "Mending Wall," in Vol. 1 of *The Poetry of Robert Frost*, ed. Edward Connery (Barre, Mass.: Imprint Society, 1971), 33-34.

2. Donald V. Smiley, "The Third Axis: Canadian-American Relations," in *Canada in Question: Federalism in the Eighties*, 3d ed., McGraw-Hill Ryerson Series in Canadian Politics (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 269-274. For a more extended discussion of this point, see Roger Gibbins, *The Defended Border: The American Impact on Canadian Political Life*, forthcoming.

3. Here a contrast may be useful. In a physical sense, albeit in a very remote physical sense, Canada shares an Arctic border with the Soviet Union. This fact, however, has virtually no psychological reality for Canadians, and thus it would be meaningless to talk about the Canadian-Soviet borderland.

4. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction," in *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, ed., Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), xi.

5. John H. Redekop, "A Reinterpretation of Canadian-American Relations," *Canadian Journal of Political Science: Revue canadienne de science politique*, 9 (1976): 237.

6. Also, by contrast, the Mexican-American border lies much closer to major American metropolitan centers than does the Canadian-American border. Certainly the proximity of the former border to southern California, and thus to the engines of American mass culture which reside in southern California, has much to do with the higher profile of the Mexican-American border in American life.

7. Robert A. Wright, "'Dream, Comfort, Memory, Despair': Canadian Popular Musicians and the Dilemma of Nationalism, 1968-1972," *Journal of Canadian Studies: Revue d'etudes canadiennes*, 22, no. 4 (Winter 1987/88): 39.

8. For a more detailed discussion, see Roger Gibbins, "Nationalism: Community Studies of Political Belief" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1974).

9. For example, attitudes towards the United States were affected by levels of formal education, political partisanship, and the degree of respondent exposure to the Canadian print and electronic media.

10. When asked if they thought of any particular country as Canada's best friend, 41 percent of the Osoyoos respondents identified the United States, while in response to the same question, 49 percent of the Oroville respondents identified Canada as the United States's best friend. However, 13 percent of the Canadian respondents also identified the United States as Canada's worst enemy, while no American respondents so identified Canada.

11. Niagara Falls is an exception to the former, and maybe to the latter.

12. The Canadian film, *My American Cousin*, was set just north of Osoyoos in the Okanagan Valley.

13. As Canadian novelist Margaret Atwood points out, "One of Canada's problems is that it's always comparing itself to the wrong thing. If you stand beside a giant, of course you tend to feel a little stunted." "Canadian-American Relations," in *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982), 380.

14. Donald Smiley, "A Note on Canadian-American Free Trade and Canadian Policy Autonomy," in *Trade-Offs on Free Trade: The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement*, ed. Marc Gold and David Leyton-Brown (Toronto: Carswell, 1988), 442.

15. For example, annual meetings between the New England state governors and the premiers of the five eastern Canadian provinces have been held since 1973.

16. Garth Stevenson, "Canadian Regionalism in Continental Perspective," *Journal of Canadian Studies: Revue d'etudes canadiennes*, 15, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 24, 27.

17. In a November 1987 Decima survey of fifteen hundred Canadian respondents, 49 percent felt that the proposed Free Trade Agreement would weaken the ability of Canadians "to keep those things which you feel make Canada unique," 15 percent felt that it would strengthen the Canadian identity, and 33 percent felt that it would make no difference. Andrew Phillips and Cindy Barrett, "Patriotism: Defining Identity," *Maclean's*, 4 Jan. 1988, 44-45.

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